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The lasting power of the local press

by Lyle Stewart

When we look at the state of newspapers today, it's tough to see much of a bright future for hard-edged journalism. Everywhere we look, large metropolitan papers are downsizing, losing vaults of money, switching to online-only editions or going out of business altogether.

The one area where I believe traditional journalism will continue to thrive, however, is in the community press. People need independent media to investigate and explain what is happening closest to them, in their community. I've worked for large national media, but never have I had the feeling that it made the difference in people's lives that more locally based outlets do.

That's why working with *the Nation* for close to 20 years has given me such satisfaction. I know that, at our best, we touch people on important questions. The role we played in sparking a needed debate on the Paix des Braves agreement, revealing the contamination of local waterways near Oujé-Bougoumou and just last fall covering the allegations of abuse by provincial police officers in Val-d'Or are incredibly important. And I'm proud to have done my part in shaping the way *the Nation* covered these issues.

Most of all, it's fun. As a young journalist, I was mentored by a colourful, outspoken individualist with a big heart: Sid Tafler. He taught me to throw caution to the wind but to get it right at the weekly *Monday Magazine* in Victoria, BC. I've tried to pass on the lessons he and others taught me to younger writers here at *the Nation*.

My close friend Will Nicholls is in much the same mould, and we've had amazing adventures together. There have been lots of laughs, arguments and even a few tears over the years as we struggled to continue publishing the only independent print media to serve the Cree communities of Northern Quebec and Ontario.

Having a career in journalism recognized by one's peers in the Quebec Community Newspaper Association – in the form of the Lyndsay Crysler Award – is a humbling experience. I am immensely grateful. Gathering for our annual gala is an important event that I look forward to every year. It's an opportunity to compare notes, honour each other's work and consume far too many drinks in a yearly ritual that is vital to our own profession. I'm very proud to be associated with the characters, true believers and fine artisans that compose this community.



Photo by Lily Ryan

Four winners of the Lyndsay Crysler Award: Steve Bonspiel (formerly a staff writer for the *Nation*, now editor and publisher of the *Eastern Door*), Lyle Stewart, publisher Linda Ludwick, and editor-in-chief Will Nicholls

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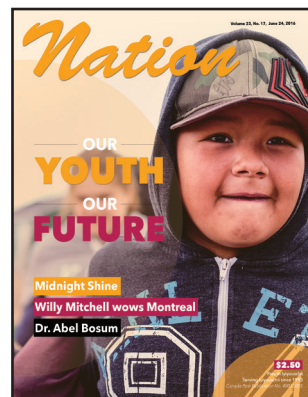
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Photos by Hyungu Kang

Pow-wowed

by Sonny Orr



My heart was beating overtime, my brow sticky with sweat and dust. The drumbeat was at once exciting and soothing. The songs sung by men from Alkali Lake, BC, effortlessly reached the high notes. Many from the circle of admirers and fans captured their pure voices with hand-held recorders. I heard a loud shrill and turned to see a magnificently dressed dancer with a flute, urging the singers to continue. In the haze of dust, a large circle of 12,000 powwow dancers from across the continent honoured the drum group and their incredible songs.

It was 1983, the end of March, at the first big powwow held at Regina's large AgriDome. As I walked around and took in the sights of the powwow grounds, thousands more spectators were present to witness the first powwow of the year – and the largest according to other seasoned powwow attendees.

Alkali Lake, once portrayed as Alcohol Lake, whose peoples suffered from intense abuses of all forms, were the winning group that year. Ordinarily clad drummers pealed out extraordinary passion in their songs, songs that reached nearly 20,000 appreciative people that day. I know, because I still remember that day. Powwows are today a great source of tradition, culture, food, fashion and art, and friendship. It's hard to forget a powwow.

Back home, powwows were the term used for our gatherings and didn't always involve the drumming and dancing of our brethren to the west. Often, our powwows were a smattering of games, contemplation, more games, feasting and dancing to fiddle music all night. Our first regional summer powwow held in Fort George yielded a massive gathering of peoples from all the communities and we celebrated the first years of our new self-government in the only way we knew, by being the greatest host you can be.

At that time, the powwow revealed itself as a competitive gathering, with the pillow fight being one of my favourite sports. How often can you duke it out with the

chief balancing on a log and whacking each other until one of you lost balance and fell off the log. Great stuff!

Another great favourite was the tug of war, which could get violent. Your legs would actually shake under the great pressure to win as you pulled your opponent across the line in the sand. If only Depends for Adults were available in those days. We wouldn't have had so many rip-roaring surprises from exertion or laughter.

Tests of strength brought out the best of the bushman skills. One of the crowd's favourite competitions was the carrying of 100-pound bags of flour, portage-style. With only a rope and minimal strapping to your forehead and bags and bags of flour heaped to your load, if you would walk further than your competition, you came in top dog. Neck brace pull was another one-on-one sport that made everyone understand that the Cree use their heads in more ways than one.

The paddling contest was one that my late uncle and I entered and we came in first easily, as we had enough time to have three cigarettes to allow the slowpokes to catch up, then paddle off again. The race was about three miles in total, across the river one mile down river and other half-mile, then back against the wind and waves to the beach.

The women also did this and were quite impressive with their stamina and endurance. Back in the day, it was the women who checked the fishnets and paddling was the only way to get around. Everyone paddled, so... the canoe race had a lot of contestants.

Today, those same games are used in our "traditional powwow." In a way, we have changed the name due to political correctness and what exactly powwow meant and to who. I found that if you gave it a name, it would be powwow because it meant that we First Nations peoples were getting together to have a good time, and no one could mistake powwow with any other national festival. Octoberfest anyone?

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Home Affront

by Joshua Grant

Waskaganish band council reneges on housing assignments for young families

Three young families in Waskaganish are left scratching their heads after being informed by their local chief and council on June 10 that their rent-to-own housing applications initially approved more than a year ago are now being refused.

In spring 2015 the Waskaganish band council approved a rent-to-own program for six new houses now standing on McLeod Street in the community. “The selection process was supposed to be up to the Housing Authority, not the chief and council,” said a mother affected by the decision. She asked *the Nation* to keep her name anonymous due to the stress these events have caused her and her family.

“A bylaw was passed that gave the Housing Authority the power to decide, they chose who the tenants would be,” she said. “Recently the Housing Authority was abolished and the chief and council are in the process of starting a new housing advisory committee. From my understanding the new committee won’t have the same power, the chief and council will have the final say. And now there is a new chief and new council members.”

Requests for comment from Waskaganish Chief Darlene Cheechoo and other council members were not returned by press time. Cheechoo and council were elected in August 2015.

Each of the families received a letter from the band council with the only explanation for their removal from the program being that their applications were affected by “irregularities.”

“We were called into a meeting last Friday, they were very vague and only brought up a few details that they felt were wrong with the applications,” the disappointed mother explained. “If they had concerns with any of the applications I wish that they would have just come to us and tried to resolve them. I’m disappointed that there wasn’t more communication.”

Friends, family and other community members are calling on council to respect the original agreement. Petitions to that effect are circulating in the community and online with many people in Waskaganish and elsewhere signing on to show their support.

The families, who were informed they can no longer move into the new homes, are listed on a photo of the petition that was widely shared on Facebook. They are: Tiffany Hester and Glenn Katapatuk, Melina Katapatuk and Anthony House, and Shaina Gagnon and Patricio Caceres A. The woman who spoke to *the Nation* anonymously says all are young couples with children and currently live with other families in cramped conditions.

She added that all three families have already spent thousands of dollars in anticipation of moving into a new

resolved,” said the Waskaganish resident. “I’m grateful for all of the support. The Elders were very supportive as well, of both sides. I think they understand that it’s a sensitive issue. I don’t know what’s going to happen though. I guess we’re just all kind of waiting still.”

But, she added, “After waiting one whole year to move into those houses, just being told that there are irregularities [in our application] isn’t really enough for us.”

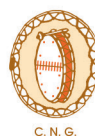
At press time *the Nation* was informed that Tiffany Hester and Glenn Katapatuk's situation "has been resolved" and Katapatuk said they have been approved to move into their new home, but declined to comment further.

"It was good, we were able to voice our concerns and have our voices heard but still nothing has been



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie



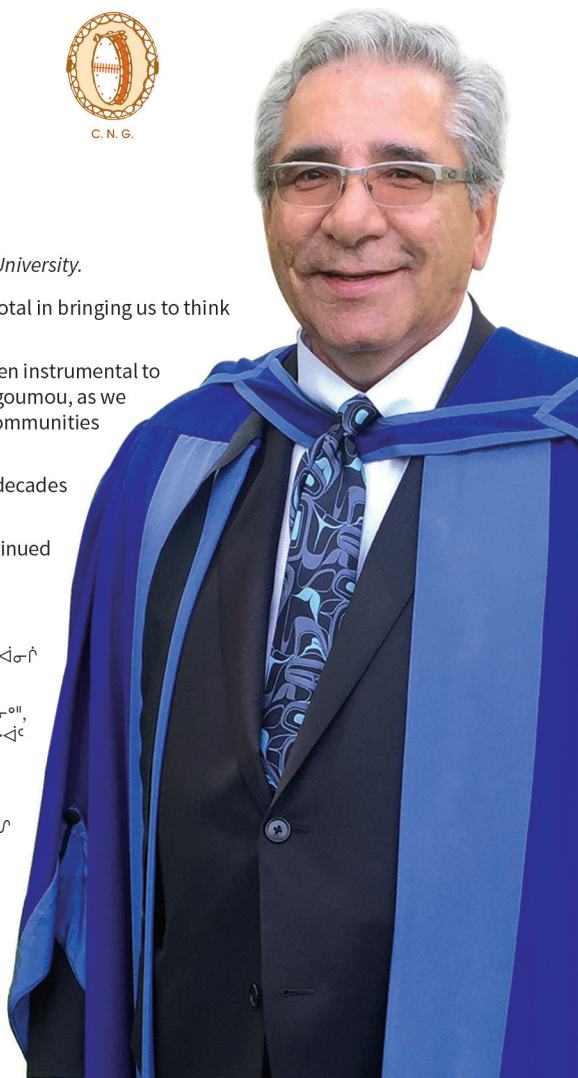
Recipient of a Degree of Doctor of Civil Law (Honoris causa) from Bishop's University.

With an unwavering commitment to help make our communities a better place, he has been instrumental to the many accomplishments of Eeyou Istchee. The creation of the community of Ouje-Bougoumou, as we know it today, as well as the negotiation of the many agreements that have provided for communities are a testament to his tenacity.

We thank you, and acknowledge your family, for your past contributions and continued dedication to Eeyou Istchee.

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Get your card

Oujé's new band numbers are a top priority

by Orlando Blacksmith

Members of the Cree Nation of Oujé-Bougoumou now use their own band numbers; they're separate from the Mistissini First Nation numbers that continued to be issued – until recently – since the community was established 25 years ago. While this was a step forward for the community, about 50% of Oujé residents are still using their old status cards – and are now beginning to discover they are no longer valid.

This is problematic for people who may be denied services to which they are entitled.

"The old [band numbers] don't work anymore," said Oujé resident Jonathan Longchap. "We have new ones. Before we were with Mistissini but ever since the signing that happened a few years back, we have our own band numbers. It's been sorted out now and people have their own, new band number. Well the ones who have filled their documents out to get the new one."

Oujé-Bougoumou has been formally recognized as a separate First Nations community only since March 14, 2014. That has allowed people to finally transfer band membership from Waswanipi or Mistissini. It may surprise most to learn that it took this long for Oujé to gain full status. For many years, I've known friends and family who always considered it their home, but were issued band numbers from other communities.

"It's especially important for students and children," said Mary Jane Cooper, who works at the Oujé band office and helps community members file the necessary documents to obtain their new status card. "Students need their new status card to get sponsored by the Cree School Board and get help, because the board needs your band and beneficiary number. It's also important for newborns because if they get sick, the Cree Health Board will cover the medical bills. Parents need to fill their children's documents as soon as possible."

The process to obtain new status cards is not complicated, according to Cooper. Members need to fill out a couple forms, and she will file the applications with Indian Affairs, which will then issue the card. She urges that people apply for them as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary complications in the future.

While steady, many residents have yet to do their paperwork. That's why Cooper is working to publicize the procedure and warn about the risks of waiting too long.

"People are slowly registering," said Cooper. "I make many announcements [for people to apply for their new cards] and every day I do reports. Right now only less than half of Oujé's residents have their new status cards. We get more and more every day but I'd like for it to be the whole community."

Band council office, Oujé-Bougoumou



Missing Mistissini girls found healthy but tired

by Orlando Blacksmith

Two girls who went missing from Mistissini Beach June 12 were found safe and sound the following night of June 13.

Cousins Talitha Shecapio Saganash, 12, and Sarah Shecapio, 9, disappeared about 10 kilometres from the community of Mistissini, at about 1:30 pm on a sunny Sunday afternoon.

"My brother [Randy Saganash, father of Talitha] had a really hard time," said Stanley Saganash. "He was searching desperately for his girl. He has been crying and searching most of the time. Please continue to pray for him and his family, and the other girl, too!"

The two girls were discovered by a group of Mistissini volunteers on IKON Road, 40 km away from the community. They were found healthy but exhausted, having spent the day walking along mining roads towards the highway, trying to make it home to their family.

The cousins walked a few kilometres from Mistissini Beach, where their family was to have a celebration, to Sonrise Camp, not too far from the community. They went for a canoe ride, and unfortunately, the wind carried them away from the beach, according to Joe Saganash, who works with the Eeyou Eenou Police Force.

Wet, cold and lost, the two girls bravely walked on, making their way along a mining road in hopes that someone from the community would see and rescue them.

"My girl is in my arms, safe and warm," said Crystal M. Shecapio, Sarah's mother. "I want to thank God, along with every soul and all those prayers and help we had and for standing by our sides with courage, faith, love and life. I have my girl in my arms again and I'm glad they were able to take care of each other when they needed it most. I would like thank each and every one who was involved in their search for my girl and my niece. Always tell your children that you love them."

Whitney Blacksmith, Darren Loon, William Coon Come and Adrian Coonishish were among the 50 volunteer searchers when they found the girls late on Monday night.

"We turned off the Ikon Road," said Coonishish. "We did not drive long, maybe 30 seconds, and there they were. The girls were walking towards us. I did not know how to feel when I saw them. I just realized that God answered prayers."

The Shecapio cousins returned to their families after Mistissini medical staff examined the two and gave them a clean bill of health. "Finally my parents get to see their grandchild, Talitha," said Stanley Saganash, on a Facebook post. "What a great feeling. Thank you all for your prayers, from the Saganash family. God is good!"



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Talitha and Sarah
Shecapio return home

Atikamekw win landmark claims case

Thanks to a May ruling by Quebec Judge Johanne Mainville, the Atikamekw are the first Quebec First Nation to win a case before Canada's Specific Claims Tribunal, established in 2008 to deal with alleged treaty violations between the federal government and Aboriginal groups.

Mainville delivered four rulings stating the government failed in its duties to warn the Atikamekw people of imminent flooding caused by the La Loutre hydroelectric dam project in 1918 and did not properly compensate them for the loss of their land, homes and traplines. The rulings also concern floods the Atikamekw suffered in the 1940s, the federal government's decades-long failure to provide clean drinking water, and the delay in creating Atikamekw reserves.

The decision can be contested until June 20 by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which would mean prolonged court processes, though it is still unclear if they will do so. Even if there is no appeal, the rulings require the Atikamekw and the federal government to negotiate a settlement. The maximum payout for cases decided by the Specific Claims Tribunal is \$150 million.

"I thought about my ancestors, my great-grandfather, about all these people, who never got the chance to fight this in the courts," Atikamekw Grand Chief Christian Awashish told the Montreal Gazette.

"The federal government has a chance to make amends, to do the right thing. It's not a perfect solution, it doesn't take away what was done but it's something we can live with."

Trudeau promises millions for mental health

Chief Bruce Shisheesh of the First Nation of Attawapiskat finally got his sit-down with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau June 13 on Parliament Hill and said he was pleasantly surprised with the results. Trudeau and the Liberal government made significant commitments to addressing the health and suicide crises impacting Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

After the April crisis in Attawapiskat that saw dozens of local youth attempt to take their own lives, Chief Shisheesh has been pushing for a meeting with the Prime Minister. Despite the federal commitments Shisheesh said, "We're still in crisis mode – not just in Attawapiskat but across Canada. It will take a lot of work to bring healing."

The \$70 million allocated to Indigenous mental-health services by Ottawa will support:

- Two permanent mental health care workers for Attawapiskat;
- A 24-hour "culturally sensitive" crisis response line;
- Four crisis response teams in Ontario, Manitoba and Nunavut – regions identified as having the greatest need;
- An increase in the number of mental wellness teams, from 11 to 43, for communities most at risk;
- Additional training for existing community-based workers.

"This is the beginning of a new era, not just for Attawapiskat, but for relationships with First Nations across the country," said Trudeau.

Bruce Shisheesh, Attawapiskat Chief



THE LONG FIGHT

Grand Chief addresses the lawsuit for **recognition of Cree rights** to northern Ontario region

by Joshua Grant



In light of the ongoing controversy regarding the Cree Nation Government's land claim in Ontario Superior Court and vocal opposition to the lawsuit by representatives of First Nations communities in northern Ontario, the Nation reached out to Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come for details on the litigation and clarification on the Grand Council's position. Here are his responses.

The Nation (TN): What was your motivation for bringing this land claim back to the table?

Grand Chief Coon Come (CC): Our motivation for pursuing this legal proceeding can be simply stated: Cree rights.

The imposition of the Ontario-Quebec boundary cut through our homeland of Eeyou Istchee, and our rights in these lands in Ontario have never been properly recognized or addressed in any treaty. There has been a long-standing commitment on the part of the Cree Nation and its leadership to achieve recognition of the Cree Nation's rights and interests in the part of our traditional territory that is located in Ontario. This commitment is not new. The Cree Nation's asserted rights in Ontario were left unresolved in the negotiations that led to the signature of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975, and have been on the books since at least 1989, when we launched the *Coon Come No. 3* lawsuit in Federal Court.

In the decades since 1989, many aspects of the original *Coon Come No. 3* lawsuit have been resolved, but the Cree Nation's rights in Ontario remained unaddressed. In recent years, we have enjoyed significant successes in advancing and protecting Cree rights over the parts of our traditional territory in Quebec and in the offshore region in James Bay and Hudson Bay. We decided that the time was right to renew our focus on advancing Cree rights in Ontario.

In July 2015, the Federal Court ruled that the Cree Nation's claims relating to Ontario lands had to be pursued in Ontario Superior Court. Following on this decision, the Cree Nation recently commenced a new proceeding in the

Superior Court of Justice of Ontario, *Coon Come No. 4*, in which both Canada and Ontario are named as defendants. In this new proceeding, we are seeking recognition of the Cree Nation's Aboriginal title and Aboriginal rights over certain lands located in Ontario, as well as damages for past breaches of our rights.

TN: Have there been any updates on the legal process? When will the case be heard and when will the CNG be presenting their claim?

CC: This is an important and complex historical case, and we are at a very early stage in the proceedings. We anticipate that it will be many years before this case will be heard, and before the Cree Nation will have an opportunity to present our arguments for the full recognition and fulfillment of our rights over all of our traditional territory.

By way of example, in the *Tsilhqot'in* case from British Columbia, which was the first time a declaration of Aboriginal title has been granted by a court in Canada, the case took more than a decade to get to trial, and the trial lasted nearly five years. The case then took another seven years for the appeal process after trial, including going all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, which issued its final judgment in June 2014.

But as our history shows, the Cree Nation is not afraid of long fights. We will continue to fight for our rights in Ontario until they are recognized.

TN: Who will be affected by the outcome?

CC: The *Coon Come No. 4* proceeding is about achieving recognition of the Cree Nation's rights over its traditional lands in Ontario. Our lawsuit expressly recognizes that other Aboriginal peoples also used and occupied these lands, in the past and through to the present. The Cree Nation's claim in *Coon Come No. 4* does not aim to affect the rights of other Aboriginal peoples in these lands, but rather seeks to achieve recognition of the Cree Nation's rights.



TN: With the negative response from some of the Ontario First Nations concerned with the land claim, are there plans to meet and discuss with the other Nations affected by the lawsuit?

CC: We have always been, and remain, open to discussing this lawsuit with other First Nations. We strongly believe that there is more that unites us than divides us, and that we will all be stronger if we work together.

TN: What would you like to say to the people of Moose Factory and the surrounding region following former Chief Hardisty's harsh comments concerning the lawsuit? Now that he is no longer Chief has there been any indication of whether or not the Moose Cree Band Council is still standing behind his statements?

CC: Former Chief Hardisty's recent open letter came at the very end of the Moose Cree First Nation's hotly contested general election. I prefer to see his comments in that political context, and not necessarily a reflection of the position and views of the Moose Cree people or its council.

I also understand that the newly elected Chief of the Moose Cree First Nation, Patricia Faries-Akiwenzie, is an experienced and well-respected Moose Cree lawyer who has previously served as Chief of her Nation. I want to congratulate her on her election, and to invite her to discuss this case with me, once she has had a chance to settle (back) into her role as Chief.

As this lawsuit moves ahead, I look forward to working with Chief Faries-Akiwenzie and her community, and with other neighbouring Ontario First Nations, so that we can better understand and support each other, and so that we can work together as much as possible to advance and exercise our rights.

TN: Do the Moose Cree stand to benefit if the lawsuit is successful? Are Mocreebec and other First Nations concerned?

CC: As I have said before, the *Coon Come No. 4* case is about the rights of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee over the parts of our traditional territory located in Ontario. It is about reclaiming from Ontario and Canada some of the rights and benefits that have been denied to us over the centuries. To the extent that we are successful in advancing these rights and claims, all members of the Cree Nation will benefit from this case.

The members of MoCreebec are all members of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee. Although the MoCreebec community is not itself named as a plaintiff, all members of MoCreebec are represented by the plaintiffs in the *Coon Come No. 4* proceedings. In addition, the *Coon Come No. 4* statement of claim proclaims and confirms that the MoCreebec community is the 11th community of the contemporary Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

More broadly, the *Coon Come No. 4* case challenges the legacy of colonial dispossession that lies at the foundation of the laws and institutions of the Canadian federation. In *Coon Come No. 4*, the Cree Nation is working to move the law of Aboriginal title and Aboriginal rights forward, and to advance the understanding, recognition and restoration of Aboriginal histories and rights in Ontario, and across the country.

TN: What are you hoping that the Quebec Cree and the Cree of Ontario will gain if you win the battle in court and what is your vision for the future for the Cree territory in Quebec and in Ontario as this claim goes to court?

CC: When I envision a post-*Coon Come No. 4* Cree Nation, I imagine a Cree Nation that possesses and exercises real governance powers and rights over our entire traditional territory, the lands that stretch across the provincial boundaries that were historically imposed upon us. I imagine that future generations of Cree people will be able to fully experience, benefit from and actively use and safeguard our entire traditional homeland, as our ancestors once did.

NATIVE MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

The Nation interviews Midnight Shine, and sees Willy Mitchell, Willie Thrasher perform in Montreal

See page 16...

May was a busy month for Midnight Shine, as the James Bay-based band played Canadian Music Week in Toronto, a live set on Canada AM, and did interviews with the CBC, CTV and Daily Vice.

As they settled back into life in Northern Ontario, singer Adrian Sutherland, guitarist Zach Tomatuk and drummer George Gillies discussed recent events with *the Nation* by telephone. Together for just under four years, the band members originally connected through music festivals and gatherings all over the region. Sutherland fondly recalls the close-knit community of Indigenous musicians in James Bay that enabled Midnight Shine to form.

"All the communities would get together every year and jam," he said. "As a solo artist I would run into all the guys. That's how we knew each other."

But it hasn't been easy for the band. Distance is a constant challenge. Sutherland lives and works in Attawapiskat, Gillies resides in Fort Albany, Tomatuk was born in Moose Factory, and bassist Stan Louttit hails from Wemindji.

The geographic complications that go along with living in the North make it impossible for them to practice on a regular basis, Gillies laments. "If I had it my way, the band would be together all the time. If we were closer, we'd be able to write and make more new music."

But Gillies also admits that the distance makes the time they do spend together more precious. "It's definitely unique and it feels fun every time we get back together."

Geography also acted as a barrier in accessing musical instruments when they were younger. "The closest music store was a five-hour train ride and then a one-hour drive away," said Tomatuk. "You had to make travel plans to get guitar strings."





NORTHERN MEN

Midnight Shine **adds an Indigenous shade** to their songwriting

by Dan Isaac



UPCOMING SHOWS:

August 5

Concert – Moose Factory

August 19

Concert – Attawapiskat

September 16

Toronto Urban Roots Festival

September 17

Toronto Urban Roots Festival

September 18

CityFolk Festival – Ottawa

(with more concert dates to come)

Singer/Songwriter: Adrian Sutherland; Guitars: Zach Tomatuk; Bass: Stan Louttit; Drums: George Gillies



Clearly though, with song titles like James Bay and Northern Man, the band uses the raw beauty of the northern landscape as inspiration.

"The land has always been healing for me," Sutherland explained. "I feel like I need to be close to my roots, and getting out there as often as I can to ground myself. There's a feeling of calmness – you're at ease and at peace when you're out on the land."

Along with the beauty of the North, however, there is isolation and other negatives such as the rash of youth suicide attempts that plagues Sutherland's community of Attawapiskat. He's acutely aware of the problem but hesitates to answer questions about it.

"Lately there have been a lot of questions about Attawapiskat. I've actually turned down numerous interviews about the crisis because who am I to try and speak about it? These are very deep-rooted issues," he explained.

It is, however, a reality in Northern communities. In fact, all the members of Midnight Shine have been affected in some way by suicide or alcoholism. And they all cited an early involvement in music as what enabled them to personally avoid negative influences.



Tomatuk said his parents gave him a guitar as a way of ensuring that he “abstained from the peer pressures of alcohol and drug use.” Gillies first picked up an instrument at the age of 11 and said, “Music helped me keep away from drugs and alcohol. Instead of going out to party, I would stay home and play music. The music shielded me.”

Sutherland spoke about his own struggles. “We all have our demons to confront,” he said. “I come from a home of alcoholism and saw a lot of violence. Naturally, I fell into that. Sometimes you feel like there’s nowhere to turn, you feel lost. You’re trying to find your identity or your purpose in life – it’s not hard to get turned around in these communities.”

For Sutherland, it was music that enabled him to heal. “Music was always my way of stepping away from all the negativity.” He began writing music at an early age and never looked back. “I wrote my first song as a teenager – it’s something I’ve always turned to.”

In addition to fronting Midnight Shine, Sutherland is a paramedic and works as the chief executive officer for economic development in his community. And he still finds the time to sing in a traditional drum group.

Listening to Midnight Shine’s music, it’s clear they have a mainstream rock sound with a dash of Indigenous

influence. But Sutherland said that when he started out he “wanted to keep the traditional separate from the mainstream” and admits he was “a little conflicted about putting the cultural stuff into the music.”

“I didn’t want to sell my culture. There’s so much more to the culture that people don’t see and can’t grasp without experiencing it,” Sutherland explained.

But these days, Sutherland is more open to incorporating culture and language into his music. The band’s latest single, Northern Man, is a perfect example. It’s a contemporary rock song that incorporates Indigenous chanting.

Sutherland added that all he set out to do was “break down barriers and take the music as far as I could.”

Before signing off, Tomatuk had a message for all the youth struggling in Attawapiskat.

“There are good days and there are bad days, but the bad days aren’t worth sacrificing the good days we have ahead of us,” he said. “There’s plenty of laughs and smiles to have in this lifetime. Keep your head up, surround yourself with good people, work towards a goal, and get at it!”





la Convention
de la Baie James
et du Nord québécois

Comité d'examen des répercussions
sur l'environnement et le milieu social

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COMEX is the Environmental and Social Impact Review Committee, established by chapter 22 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement.

It's mission is to review the environmental and social impacts of proposed development projects and make recommendations to the provincial and regional administrator of the Convention.

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- Get information on projects under review
- Participate by expressing your views and opinions

Some projects currently under review that may interest you :

- Construction of forest roads by Barette-Chapais Itée.: E West and extention of L209 North.
- Construction of new solid waste disposal facility in Waswanipi.
- Construction of wood pellet facility in Chapais by Rentech.

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AT HOME ON THE STAGE

by Jesse Staniforth

Photos by Wayne William Archibald





Top: Willie Thrasher;
Bottom: Willy Mitchell

Artists from Native North America receive warm welcome in Montreal



“Hey John! You’re already home! Up here on this stage!”

Inuit folksinger Willie Thrasher was shouting between verses of “Eskimo Named Johnny,” a song he wrote a lifetime ago in the 1970s, when he’d just finished surviving residential school and was living in Ottawa a long way from anyone he knew. Back then music was his only friend.

That changed long ago. At the Sala Rossa in Montreal June 5, there were 200 people clapping and stomping their feet while they sang along with him and partner Linda Saddleback. Thrasher, like Johnny, really was home up on that stage.

Thrasher was part of a two-night showcase following the enormous success of the *Native North America Vol. 1* compilation album, which brought the regional Indigenous music of the 1960s and

1970s to a huge international audience. It also garnered nominations in Canada’s Polaris Prize and the American Grammy Awards for Best Historical Album.

Kevin James Howes, the DJ and record collector who assembled the compilation and contacted all the original musicians for their permission, was also in attendance. He soaked in the atmosphere of yet another crowd going crazy for Thrasher.

“What was once regional is now digital, so the music has actually been able to go around the world,” he said. “We were getting love from England, Germany, Japan, all over the United States. It was overwhelming to get that feedback.”

Of the Grammy nomination Howes said, “To see these artists recognized on that platform was incredible, even though the work that I do is always a labour of love and never had anything to do with getting awards. Though it didn’t win, the recognition for the artists was staggering.”

Working with record label Light in the Attic, which released *Native North America*

Vol. 1, Howes also reissued Thrasher's 1981 album *Spirit Child*. More recently, he reissued Yup'ik singer John Angaiak's *I'm Lost in the City* and Mistissini legend Morley Loon's *Northland, My Land*. He's passionate about lost music, and especially passionate about Indigenous music that never received the wide audience he feels it deserved.

"Through that process travelling across the country looking for vinyl records for DJing and historical work, you start learning about Willie Dunn, Shingoose, Sugluk, Morley Loon and you fall in love and want to learn more," Howes recounted. "In my case it was related to my upbringing, and the history of Canada and its brutal past. One thing I'm very excited about is the Indigenization of the school curriculum across Canada. It's an important part of our collective cultural fabric."

The following night, Mistissini's Willy Mitchell headlined a concert across the street at the Casa Del Popolo. They'd booked him into a smaller room, which seemed to be a mistake, since all the tables were removed to accommodate the crowd that turned out to hear Mitchell sing classics like "Call of the Moose" and "Birch Bark Letter."

Mitchell has had more than his share of difficult encounters with Canada's brutal past. Even being born was a trial for him, after his Algonquin and Mohawk parents were turned away from a hospital in Cornwall while his mother was in labour. Raised in Kitigan-Zibi, he was shot in the head by a police officer in 1969 during a dispute over Christmas lights. As he recalled after the show, white police in Native communities had very itchy trigger fingers in those days. The resulting payout from the shooting gave Mitchell enough money to buy a Fender Telecaster, a guitar he still owns and which he broke out onstage on June 6.

The change since the release of *Native North America* has been a big one, Mitchell agreed. "Just the royalties alone, they really blew up," he enthused. "I like that part! It hasn't been since 1993 that I've cut a record. All my recordings are like that – 10 years apart or more. I'm a slow writer. My songs contain a lot of topics at the same

time. People are listening to one line after another and thinking about everything I'm saying as I'm piling it up. Especially for the people who've never heard me before, the lyrics are new. I can see their faces react to certain lines – they're quiet, and that means they're liking what they're hearing if they're quiet."

The room wasn't quiet while he played, however. There was a certain contingent of rowdy fans that had come down from Mistissini. They seemed to be getting to Mitchell, who said later that they "brought all the negativity from Mistissini down here to come and bug my ass."

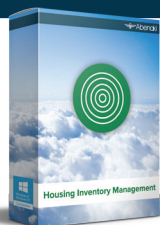
But he and his band played through their set list. And when the cheering crowd demanded an encore, they ad-libbed their way through a blues song and closed the show with a cover of "House of the Rising Sun," with the crowd providing back-up singing.

Though Mitchell feels the popularity of Christianity in the Cree communities prevented the growth of traditional ceremonies and practices for many years, he's glad to see the expanding culture around powwows in Mistissini and other Cree communities.

"It got to a point where people were afraid of the drum," he said. "They forbid their kids to touch it – they kept it in a glass case for years. And it's still in a glass case, but it's slowly coming out. Now they have a powwow in Mistissini, and it's very encouraging to see that. The kids love it, working on their regalia all winter, and they dance all summer. They have two powwows. I don't know how the Christian people are taking it. They're slowly loosening up and supporting their kids in doing powwow."

At both Thrasher's and Mitchell's shows, the audience varied wildly, from young people to Elders, from gentle-natured music fans to punk-rockers. Howes credits the continuing value of the music for drawing so many different people together.

"It's nice to see such a wide range of people coming together and celebrating the music, and learning from each other," he said. "That's the power of music – it brings people together. I'm honoured I could play a small part in helping to facilitate that."



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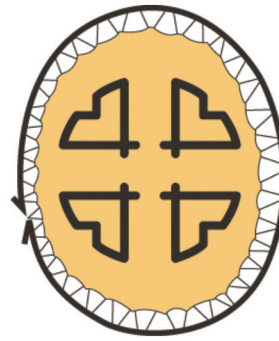
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new Director of Cree Patient Services



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Espresso Hotel improvements

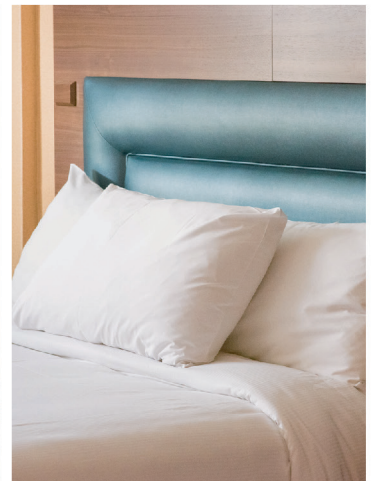
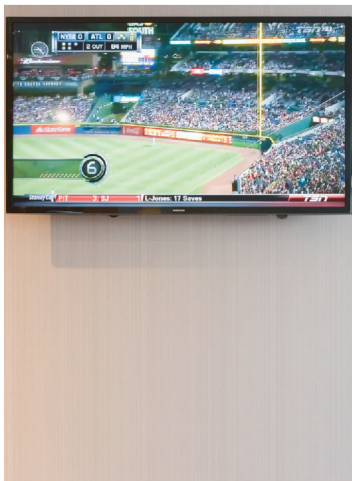
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Espresso Hotel - New and Improved



photography: T. Philiptchenko



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Complaints Commissioner
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Congratulations to **Dr. Abel Bosum**



With deepest pride and most profound appreciation, the Council of the Oujé-Bougoumou Cree Nation, on behalf of the entire community, extends its congratulations to our former Chief, **Abel Bosum** on the occasion of his having conferred upon him the degree of Doctor in Civil Law, Honoris Causa, by Bishop's University on June 4, 2016.

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY

Abel Bosum imparts wisdom as he receives honorary law degree

by Dan Isaac

Photos by Irene Quinn

The crowded auditorium falls silent as the speaker approaches the podium to address the graduating class of 2016. It's a big moment but it's one our speaker is used to. Abel Bosum has spoken all over the world, negotiated landmark treaties for the Cree, and accepted awards from the United Nations. Today he's been chosen to receive an honorary doctorate in Civil Law from Bishop's University and give the convocation address to its graduates.

At the microphone, Bosum shares the story of who he is and where he comes from. How he "was born in the bush," had home and freedom in his early life, living off the land, then having that home, freedom, and "choice" taken away by the residential school system.

"This was my reality at the tender age of five. I was swept away from my parents, away from my culture and traditions and displaced to a strange environment with strange people and strange rules."

It's not your typical convocation address. It's lacking the hollow platitudes and weighty observations about the years to come. Instead it comes entirely from personal experience. It was significant for Bosum to share his story of the residential school system with the graduates, as he's sure many were unaware of its dark legacy. On another level though, Bosum sees his willingness to share his story as a key in overcoming the traumas experienced during that chapter of his life.

"It helps you overcome the past and heal from the pain of that moment," he says. "It also helps me reflect and sends a message to [this generation] about what life was like back then."

But his harrowing story doesn't end with residential school. In fact, it's just beginning. When Bosum returned to James Bay, after 10 long years in residential school, he was shocked to discover the destructive toll industry had taken on his home.

"Our villages – our homes – along with our graveyards were bulldozed by mining companies to make room for their exploration and development work," he recalled. "It was clear that the mining companies were in charge and their activities took precedence over everything else. We had to relocate our homes and rebuild our villages seven times during the course of 15 years to make room for mining development. By the 1970s, we came to be viewed as squatters on our own homeland and every effort was made to make us disappear."

It would have been easy for Bosum to fall into a pit of despair. Instead, he "embarked on a path of mutual respect and collaboration,





Abel Bosum: transforming anger into change

and also, on a path of Indigenous nation-building.”

Bosum admits there was anger inside him, however. “The anger is always there. It’s how you control that anger. Sometimes the anger is what drives you to want to make that change. If I didn’t have that anger, I would have probably moved on to something else. But because it stayed there, it reminded me of what needed to be done.”

However, Bosum insists it was the voice of his people that guided him and the Cree of Oujé-Bougoumou back home. That inspiration carried him, at times, through an odyssey of more than 15 years that saw the community go from tarpaper shacks on the side of the road to an international award-winning model for Indigenous living.

“I was fortunate enough to start working with the Cree when I was very young,” he explained. “I listened to Elders, women and

youth, and I kept their dreams and aspirations with me.”

Transformation was a reoccurring theme in Bosum’s address. Transforming anger into inspiration, struggle into purpose, dreams into reality, and indeed the very act of awarding an Indigenous person an honorary degree in Civil Law is symbolic of how things have transformed in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canada – given that it was illegal for an Indigenous person in Canada to hire legal council until 1951.

When asked about his views on the changing times and closing the socio-economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, he replied, “We’re getting there.”

He added, “The objective now is to focus our attention on where we want to be. Rather than just hoping, we can set real targets. Set targets for the kind of communities we want to have [based on] princi-



ples and values that were handed down for many generations.”

Having learned from an early age that choice can be taken away, Bosum sees it a right and privilege. Nearing the end of his address he implored the graduates to use it “responsibly and wisely.” He echoed that sentiment later when speaking about Indigenous youth.

“They now have a choice. The choices they make today will impact their families and communities for years to come.”

Bosum believes in what the future holds for Indigenous youth. “They have all the tools around them and it can be a very exciting life for them. They can have a story to tell too. These are very positive times.”

His parting piece of wisdom for the graduates: “Be courageous – become the hero of your own story.”

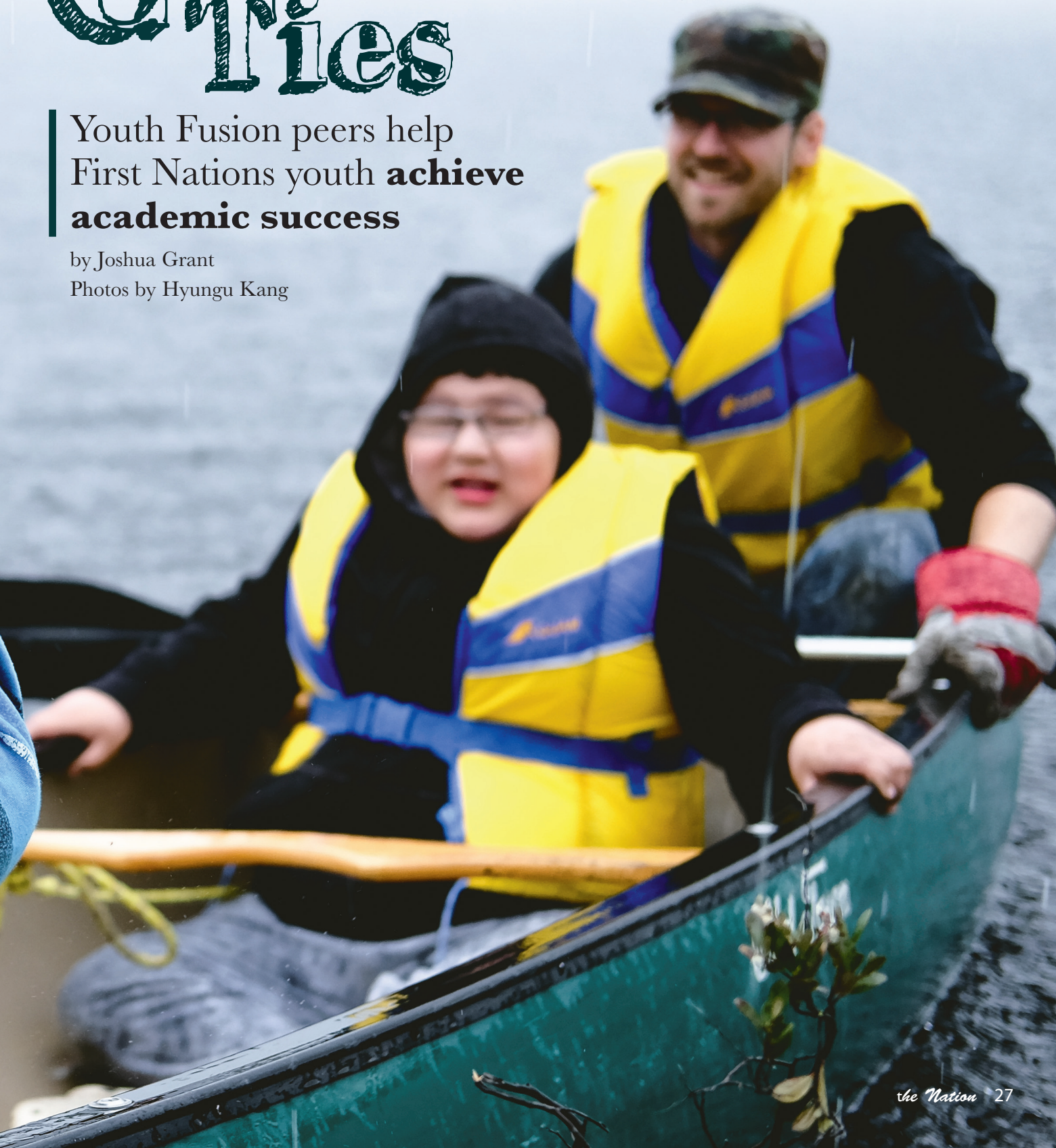


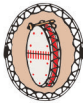
Community Ties

Youth Fusion peers help
First Nations youth **achieve
academic success**

by Joshua Grant

Photos by Hyungu Kang





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Ouje-bougoumou:	418-745-2260
Waskaganish:	819-895-2126
Waswanipi:	819-753-2770
Wemindji:	819-978-3300
Whapmagoostui:	819-929-3796

If you have any additional questions or need more information, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val d'or at 819-874-2600 or by email at justice.valdor@cngov.ca.

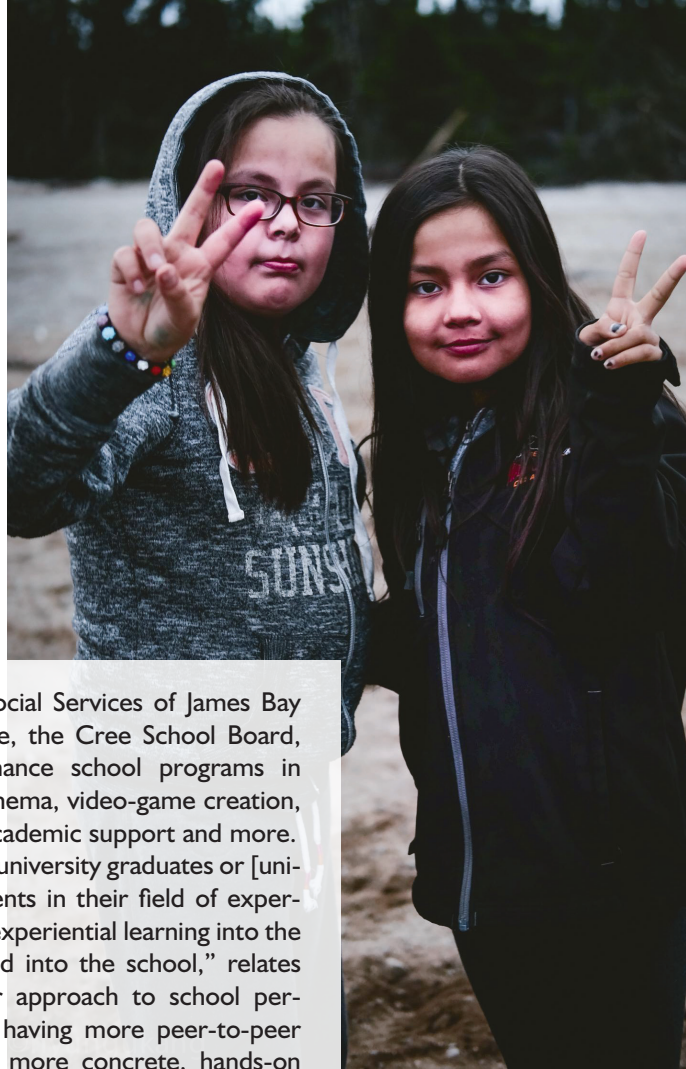
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“There is a girl that I have never seen smile before and this weekend she was laughing and smiling. I want to thank you for that.”

- Kimi Wapachee-McDougall,
Secondary 4, École Voyageur
Memorial School, Mistissini





For Indigenous people, says André-Yanne Parent, “the experience of school has been very traumatic.”

That’s why Parent, of the group Youth Fusion, is working to ensure that schools reach out to parents. She wants schools to “go outside of their walls to be present and fully participate in their communities.”

Youth Fusion is a charity organization dedicated to creating ties between schools and the communities they serve, providing support to at-risk youth and lowering school dropout rates. Parent, the director of education programming for Indigenous communities, helps organize full-time programming 30 hours a week in schools from September to June across Quebec.

Youth Fusion has been present in Eeyou Istchee for six years. They have partnerships with the Cree Nation Justice Department, the Cree Nation Youth Council, Cree Nation Human Resources Department, the Cree Health

Board and Social Services of James Bay and of course, the Cree School Board, that help finance school programs in media and cinema, video-game creation, leadership, academic support and more.

“We hire university graduates or [university] students in their field of expertise to bring experiential learning into the classroom and into the school,” relates Parent. “Our approach to school perseverance is having more peer-to-peer teaching and more concrete, hands-on activities.”

Parent, a Mi’kmaq, is very enthusiastic about the First Nations programming she’s been developing with the award-winning charity, known as Fusion Jeunesse in other areas of Quebec.

The students Youth Fusion hires receive training to prepare them for the community where they will be working, especially inter-cultural knowledge, she says. “For our team working in Eeyou Istchee we make sure that they have basic Cree language knowledge, that





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they're able to meet with Elders and other people who can tell them more about the culture."


For elementary students, Youth Fusion's programs focus on student engagement. High school programs centre on leadership and healthy living. Each school year the programs culminate in extra-curricular activities that aim to take what the students have learned a step further, applying their lessons, challenging them to grow and creating networks amongst communities and nations.

Recently, Youth Fusion organized two events for young Crees – a leadership conference for high school students held in Waswanipi and a weekend camp in Eastmain for Grade 5 and 6 students from Chisasibi, Eastmain, Waskaganish and Nemaska. In order to participate in these special activities students need to be actively involved in their school and community.

"It's really a question of whether or not you've been active and engaged with the school and the student council throughout the course of the year," explained Parent. "It's not necessarily a question of academic success."

The leadership conference brought together youth from Waswanipi, Mistissini, Nemeska, Waskaganish, Eastmain, Chisasibi, Whapmagoostui and the Innu community of Puvurnituq under the theme "Aspire to Inspire".

Waswanipi Chief Marcel Happyjack shared his thoughts on what it means to be a leader and Maité Labecque spoke



“My favourite part of participating in the secondary and elementary leadership camp was travelling, the challenges and meeting new people. I made new friends at both. The challenges I faced were mostly in the elementary leadership camp, leading a group that was full of energy. I learned some leadership skills, how to handle a group of kids and how to make grilled cheese using a hot dog bun!”

*-Julianne Mark, Secondary 3,
Wabannutao Eeyou
School, Eastmain*

about her experience as a youth activist. Marie-Céline Charron, a Naskapi traditional powwow dancer, offered the students a dance workshop and Waswanipi drummers Washekun showcased traditional drumming.

Other activities included a sexual education workshop with Shanice Yarde of Head and Hands, the creation of a mural in collaboration with Montreal’s First People Cultural and Artistic Embassy DestiNATIONS and group activities geared towards cultivating a sense of identity.

At the leadership camp in Eastmain, Grade 5 and 6 students from Chisasibi, Eastmain, Waskaganish and Nemeska split up into family groups – Caribou, Wolves and Nisk – based on the staff and coordinator’s knowledge of individuals and how they would work together as a group.

The family groups create their own code of conduct for interacting with each other throughout the weekend. They participated in a variety of activities including beading, button-making, canoeing, first aid and anti-bullying workshops. There were also sports activities, evening bonfires, singing and storytelling. At the end of the weekend, each group had to tackle special team challenges that stressed communication, problem solving and teamwork.

Parent said that both the parents and the students involved in the Eastmain camp had to sign consent forms detailing all of the camp activities. “That’s something we’re trying to re-introduce to the communities,” Parent noted,



André-Yanne Parent of Youth Fusion

“the idea of consent. They know what they’re participating in and they’re agreeing to be a part of it.”

She added, “It’s really all about self-esteem. This is the key element to be able to experience success at school. Another key component is teamwork – recognizing other people’s strength, being able to share your own vulnerabilities. We want them be able to express themselves and communicate in a group and also recognize and express their emotions. Let’s say they feel frustration or anger – they’re able to identify those emotions, share them with their team members and together find solutions on how to deal with them.”

In conclusion, Parent stressed that their efforts in the nations of Eeyou Istchee and Nunavik are about developing cultural pride, creating peer-to-peer connections and teaching youth to be positive role models for their younger friends.

“Our larger goal is for youth to be engaged with their school, their peers, and their community, to lead by example,” she said. “We’re trying to create networks between the different nations and also between the different communities.”



Top: Lyle Stewart with
Steve Bonnsiel, QCNA
president; Bottom: The
Nation's table
at the QNCA awards



Community. spirit



The Nation parties with the competition at the **2016 QCNA awards gala**

by Joshua Grant

The Quebec Community Newspaper Association (QCNA) hosted its 2016 awards gala June 3 at the Holiday Inn Pointe-Claire to honour journalists, photographers, editors and publishers from across the province for their work in community media.

As a relatively young writer at my first QCNA awards, it was inspiring to discover so many passionate people compelled to share the unique stories of their communities and represent the people in the court of public opinion. Alongside *the Nation* were other Indigenous newspapers such as the Nunatsiaq

News of Nunavik and Kahnawake's Eastern Door. They both work tirelessly to defend the rights of their people, pressure the government to address issues of inequality and above all celebrate Indigenous culture.

The awards gala was an enjoyable evening spent with my bosses and colleagues – publisher Linda Ludwick, editor-in-chief Will Nicholls, editor Lyle Stewart and fellow journalist Joel Barde. All told, *the Nation* took home five writing awards, a couple of honourable mentions and the prestigious Lindsay Cryslar award.



Upcoming Fishing derbies

June 23, 2016 - July 2, 2016
James Bay Walleye Fishing Tournament
Quebec

June 24-26, 2016
Geraldton Walleye Classic
Greenstone, Ontario

June 25, 2016
Lac St. Louis Ripple
near Montreal

July 8-10, 2016
Caramat Fishing Derby
Greenstone, Ontario

July 9, 2016
Morrisburg, Ontario

July 9-10, 2016
Agimak Lake Fishing Tournament
Ignace, Ontario

July 15-16, 2016
Lake Nipigon Trout Hunt
Greenstone, Ontario

July 15-17, 2016
Big Rock Fishing Derby
Oujé-Bougoumou, Quebec

July 29-31, 2016
Nakina Bass Derby
Greenstone, Ontario

July 30, 2016
The Ripple
Cornwall, Ontario

July 2016
Tim Horton's Hook'em & Hold'em Tournament
Port Perry, Ontario

August 6, 2016
Richelieu Ripple
Richelieu River & Lake Champlain, Quebec

August 2016
Waswanipi Old Post Fishing Derby
Waswanipi, Quebec

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Left: the Nation wins Best Feature Series award for coverage of abuse allegations against Val-d'Or SQ officers; Right: Will Nicholls and Linda Ludwick



Lyle Stewart won third prize for Best Business Column or Feature with his profile on the Inuit company Kong-struction, and was also one of the contributing writers to *the Nation's* first place finish in Best Feature Series. Our coverage of the Val-d'Or crisis and allegations brought against the Sûreté du Québec by Native women in the city was deemed "powerful and thorough" by QCNA judges.

"The topic is handled with dignity without sacrificing the hard-hittingness of the piece or skirting the tensions between the Native and non-Native populations within the community," the panel wrote. Congratulations to Lyle Stewart, Jesse Staniforth, Peter Wheeland and Joel Barde who helped expose the unfortunate reality of systemic racism that still exists today and shared the struggles of these women and the efforts taken by the Cree Nation, Val-d'Or and the government of Quebec to repair relations between the communities.

An article I wrote on the disappearance and subsequent return of Mistissini's Lynn Iserhoff earned second place for Best News Story – an obvious second to Nunatsiak's coverage of a Russian helicopter pilot who crashed in Arctic waters, swam to an ice floe and fended off polar bears for two days before being rescued. After the awards, first-place winner David Murphy smiled and told me, "That piece just sort of wrote itself."

Joel Barde grabbed second place for Best Feature Story with his article on the annual Mamoweedow Festival, where he spent a few days on Fort George Island learning about Cree culture and traditions and living off the land. He also won third place for Best

Arts & Entertainment Story with his feature on Cree comedian Howie Miller.

Finally, editor and long-time contributor Lyle Stewart was recognized for his "outstanding contribution to the growth and development of community newspapers in Quebec" – becoming the third member of *the Nation* to win the Lindsay Crysler Award, following Will Nicholls and Linda Ludwick.

Lyle's journalism resumé is quite impressive. He began in 1984 as a staff writer for a student newspaper called the Martlet in Victoria, BC, where he went on to become news editor and editor-in-chief. After covering political, social and environmental issues with *Western Report* and *Monday Magazine*, where he also became assistant editor, Lyle moved to Montreal where he wrote for the *Montreal Mirror* and worked for *Hour Magazine* as news editor and political columnist before spending time with the *Montreal Gazette*, *Radio Canada International* and *CBC-TV* news.

Since joining *the Nation* in the late 1990s Lyle has become deeply involved with the communities of Eeyou Istchee and a crucial part of *the Nation's* editorial staff as a writer, copy editor and mentor to all of our journalists. We couldn't be happier to have him on board and see his hard work rewarded. It's clear to see he understands the role we play as journalists and the impact we can still have in a media landscape saturated with clickbait headlines and viral content.

Here's to another year serving Eeyou Istchee and First Peoples across Canada and beyond!



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The staff and Boards of Directors of the
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and the

Eenou/Eeyou Community Foundation
wish to congratulate our president,
Abel Bosum,

whose substantial contributions to the
Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee have been
recognized by the awarding of the degree
of Doctor of Civil Law (Honoris causa)
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Congratulations Dr. Bosum!



First Peoples Festival shines spotlight on **Indigenous culture makers**

By Joel Barde



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Global. Voices



August marks the 26th anniversary of Montreal's First Peoples Festival. According to festival director André Dudemaine, this year's event will place the spotlight on important works by Indigenous people from around the world.

"As Indigenous people we have to take our place in the cultural landscape of the world. And a good way to do this is to showcase our art in cultural metropolises like Montreal. Indigenous artists need to make sure they are seen and heard in the wider world."

The festival will be held August 3-10 and will showcase films that address Indigenous identity. Dudemaine said every year the festival is able to screen an ever-increasing number of films created by Indigenous filmmakers.

"In the US and Canada, Indigenous people have a strong but complicated relationship with film and television," said Dudemaine. "We feel we need to take revenge for the awful way we were portrayed in the past. But now we are finding film is a great way of expression. It can connect to our own oral traditions."

The closing film of the festival, *Le cercle des nations*, is a compilation of shorts directed by Indigenous people in Canada and South America. Many of them, said Dudemaine, will be present at the screening.

Abenaki artist Sylvain Rivard will figure large at this year's festivities. He will present an art show that will blend traditional Abenaki art with his celebrated collages, many of which have appeared in children's books.

"Using ancient techniques and mixed media, such as paper and bark, I try to create a contemporary ethnological art that is closer to Aboriginal identity and goes beyond cultural mixing," explained Rivard. "There is an important question to ask – why should artefacts be left to scientists and art to First Nations artists when syncretism is possible?"

Rivard will be one of several Abenaki people who will showcase how the Abenaki harvest ash trees, a traditional practice about which they hope to educate the broader population. The demonstrations will be held August 5 and 7.

Over the past few years, Montreal's ash tree population has been decimated because of an insect infestation. Some of the fallen trees will be used for the celebration.

"We know that the ash trees are dying. And we don't want to take a moralistic point-of-view. But this attack on the tree speaks to us as Indigenous people. We want to show how we are tied to the spirit of trees."

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Hate Is A Four Letter Word

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On June 12, we were all reminded just how crazy, bigoted and homophobic our world is. At least 49 people were massacred and 53 more injured at a gay club in Orlando, Florida, by one gunman with a high-powered assault rifle. This type of tragedy is certainly terrorism, but it does not really have much to do with the Muslim religion. In fact, the Christian religion is equally full of hate when it comes to gay or even bisexual people.

How can we be so backward and narrow in this day and age when it comes to sexuality? Many of my friends and I grew up in small northern First Nations and towns where it was not easy to survive being different in any way. For gay or bisexual people, life in these communities is still not easy. There is all kinds of discrimination, intolerance and downright hate when it comes to dealing with being gay or bisexual outside of city centres.

For some strange reason this type of hatred is alive and well in many of our communities. A healthy percentage of our population is either gay or bisexual, but for many people it is impossible to live their lives as they were meant to be. They have to hide their feelings and that only causes problems.

Long ago in First Nations culture two-spirited people (gays) were respected for who they were and held important roles in society. With the coming of the Europeans and their religions a new way of thinking was forced on my people. Though the missionaries who promoted these attitudes were bound by rules of celibacy, it has long been known that very few did without sex.

The idea that religious leaders must be celibate always puzzled me. It is a fallacy to pretend that people can live without engaging in natural necessities like sex. Rather than celebrate our differences in so many ways we have chosen to discriminate and promote hatred against certain segments of society and that has only caused all of us pain in one way or another.

I am happy to know that there are more and more gay and bisexual people finding strength in numbers and organizing in small northern communities so that

there is support and safety for all. Timmins recently celebrated a pride parade and there was a First Nation two-spirit speaker at the event.

However, things are still not easy for gay or bisexual people in smaller northern First Nations communities. Too many people do not feel free to be themselves. They live in fear of being compromised or accused of being sinners or worse. Those who work in education, politics, administration and business must always be cautious in voicing their opinions and taking stands on any matter that goes against the grain. That should not be the case.

The Orlando massacre was very upsetting. The event placed two very controversial and vulnerable minorities into the spotlight – the LGBT people and Muslims. If the death of 49 people were not enough, this tragic event also brought out the hatred that the religious right has for homosexuals and even more hatred for Muslims. The days following the Orlando shooting, I wondered about the state of the world and how we will ever evolve beyond the narrow-minded views of our past.

History is a favourite topic. Over the years I have learned one thing in all of the reading and the traveling I have done – sadly we remain more like cavemen who have developed technology and organizations that we are not intelligent or sophisticated enough to responsibly handle. Hopefully, future generations will look back on this time and wonder how human beings ever made it past this time period. Then again, if we continue as we are, there may not be many future generations.

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